

LOCAL REPORT

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Town: Better late than never

Officials to discuss toxic site with EPA

By SARAH GREENBLATT
STAFF WRITER

With the federal Environmental Protection Agency targeting the Hamilton Industrial Park for cleanup, South Plainfield officials say they are glad to have help in addressing a long-standing concern.

Borough and EPA officials are scheduled to meet this morning, and local Environmental Commission Chairman Larry Randolph said he looks forward to developing a dialogue with federal officials and finally getting things after years of being mostly ignored.

the wilderness, and nobody paid any attention to it," Randolph said yesterday.

Few homes about the Hamilton Boulevard site, but the EPA report notes that 500 homes are within a quarter-mile. One resident said Tuesday that she was completely unaware of a problem until an agency official knocked on her door that day. Yesterday, another resident said he still had not been informed of the federal cleanup.

An EPA agent will be on the site to assist anyone who has questions, agency spokesman Rich Cahill said yesterday.

Please see **Toxic**, page B2

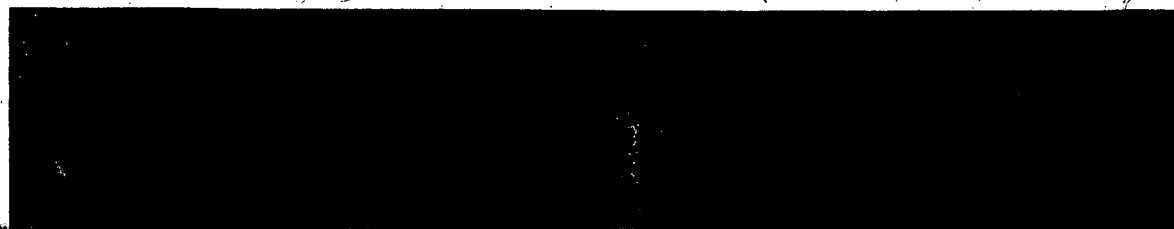


● According to a federal report, this site may be the most contaminated lot in the Hamilton Industrial Park, South Plainfield. It has been targeted for cleanup, possibly under the Superfund program.

KEITH A. MUCCILLI
Staff photographer

Sewing class isn't what it seams

Students learn to plan ahead, give to others



BUSINESS GETS OK

Gill Lane approval angers neighbors

Before last night, Pemberton was the executive assistant to county Comptroller Albert P. Kuchinskis. The promotion to clerk will raise Pemberton's annual salary from \$45,556 to \$52,000.

— Andy Williams

NEIGHBORS

■ Continued from page B1

commercial building.

Most of the building space will be used as a child-care center, but Mucci said he is uncertain what other businesses will be there.

Mucci said he already has a 1987 use variance that would allow him to build the commercial building.

"Changing of the zone doesn't make a bit of difference," he said. "I don't think some of the residents understand that."

Mucci, who owns several properties in Woodbridge, said the Gill Lane area has changed over the years and is now more commercial than residential.

The site is near the Metropark Train Station, which serves 4,700 passengers a day, and within a few miles of Woodbridge Center and a heavily commercial section of Route 1.

"Zones change," Mucci said. "As uses come in, traffic comes in, and nobody wants to live there. You have to change to meet the needs of the area."

TOXIC: South Plainfield site may go on Superfund list

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The EPA has ordered owners of the industrial park to contain contamination at the site, based on an agency report that documents high levels of lead, cadmium and polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, in the soil there.

Pending further study of contamination at the industrial park, the agency may place the site on the National Priority List for cleanup under the federal Superfund program.

Randolph said the commission has suspected for years that contamination existed at the site, formerly owned by Cornell-Dubilier Electronics. Randolph said, however, that documentation of such contamination was difficult.

"We've been trying to get information for years, but it just seemed to get lost in this bureaucratic mess," Randolph said, adding that the state Department of Environmental Protection was slow to respond to borough requests for help.

The 25-acre industrial park has some 15 businesses, connected by an unpaved road that contains high levels of lead and PCBs, according to the EPA report.

Based on 23 soil samples, the report found the most severe contamination in a 1½-acre area that is enclosed by a chain-link fence.

High levels of contaminants also were found along a pedestrian and bicycle path that crosses the property and in a tributary of the Bound Brook that borders the site near Spicer Avenue.

Borough environmental specialist Alice Tempel said she became aware of likely contamination at the site soon after starting her current job in 1995.

Cornell-Dubilier had employed many borough residents when it operated at the site from 1936 to 1962, Tempel said, and many of them talked about materials from the electronics-manufacturing process being dumped there.

"A lot of people knew they were dumping waste capacitors back there," Tempel said. "It was no secret, but nobody knew for quite a few years that it was a problem."

The EPA report notes that portions of the site are strewn with electrical and transformer parts, some embossed with the name "Cornell-Dubilier."

Cornell-Dubilier President James Kaplan was unavailable for comment yesterday. The firm now is located in Wayne.

Tempel said soil testing completed by the DEP in 1986 revealed substantial contamination, but some of the test results later were proven to be inaccurate. That made it difficult to make the site a priority for cleanup, she said.

DEP spokesman Fred Mumford said the state agency had advised the EPA of contamination at the site in 1986 and directed Cornell-Dubilier and the current property owner, D.S.C. of Newark Enterprises, to clean it up. Mumford said the companies did not respond.

The EPA's Cahill said the site was not considered a priority at that time.

With the report revealing PCB contamination thousands of times above government guidelines of acceptable levels, Cahill said, the agency has directed the past and current property owners to pave the dirt road and to erect a fence around the entire tract.

BOARD: Tax

■ Continued from page B1

What Kubulak and Mascenik, with members Fernando Irizarry James Kehoe, have proposed is to use surplus funds to offset part of the increase. DeTalvo, they say, told them they could apply surplus funds and, at a board meeting in February, specifically said that the vote was not allowed.

At the board meeting on February 12, audience member Ramon St. asked DeTalvo if there was any way to eliminate the tax increase by using surplus funds. DeTalvo replied: "No."

According to a tape of the meeting, DeTalvo continued, saying that state's new funding law limited district's options.

Board members were surprised to learn later that the new law does not permit district's to use surplus funds to offset the tax increase. Kubulak was the Department of Education director of finance, Mike Azzara,

SEWING: P

■ Continued from page B1

their own project, let alone do something for someone else.

"This is really a neat thing to do," she added. "These kids doing much more responsive and caring."

Leoncavallo's altruistic aims seek to motivate her students. Thirteen-year-old Dawn Philips, who was re-tooled her trauma doll, said the work was pretty simple. "This project is cool because it is easy for us as it helps little kids," she said.

Mike Schultz, also 13, bent over an ironing board, pressing squares of

HAPPY FIRST BIRTHDAY
Jacqueline Jeanette
Teitelbaum



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